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42281

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SECTIONS 1 &amp; 2 OF 42281

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TO RUHHHQA/CINCPAC

INFO RUEKJCS/CJCS

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~~TOP SECRET~~ SPECAT EXCLUSIVE FOR ADM MCCAIN INFO ADMOORER FROM  
 GENERAL WEYAND. DELIVER DURING WAKING HOURS. SEC 1 OF 2  
 SUBJECT: SPECIAL ASSESSMENT (U)

REFERENCE: COMUSMACV DTG 061218Z AUG 72 (TS)(SPECAT)

1. (C) THIS MESSAGE PROVIDES AN UPDATE ON THE SITUATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF VIETNAM AS SET FORTH IN REFERENCE MESSAGE.
2. (TS) PRESIDENT THIEU, ON 24 AUGUST, GAVE UNMISTAKABLE DIRECTION TO HIS COMMANDERS, THE THEME OF WHICH WAS THE CRITICAL RELATIONSHIP OF THEIR EFFORTS FOR THE NEXT TWO AND ONE HALF MONTHS TO THE SURVIVAL OF SOUTH VIETNAM. U.S. SENIOR ADVISORS CONFIRM THAT GVN COMMANDERS DOWN TO DIVISION AND SECTOR LEVEL UNDERSTAND FULLY THE IMPORT OF HIS INSTRUCTIONS TO GAIN AND MAINTAIN THE INITIATIVE IN ALL SECTORS OF SVN.

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3. (T) IN MR 4 THE ENEMY EFFORTS TO ESTABLISH A SIGNIFICANT PRESENCE IN DINH TUONG PROVINCE CONTINUED; HOWEVER, IV CORPS

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TACTICAL OPERATIONS HAVE PREVENTED THE SEIZURE OF ANY IMPORTANT POLITICAL OR MILITARY OBJECTIVES AND ARVN HAS GAINED THE UPPER HAND IN THAT KEY AREA. SEGMENTS OF HIGHWAY 4 HAVE BEEN INTERDICTIONED BY SMALL ARMS AND B-40 FIRE FOR BRIEF PERIODS, BUT THE ENEMY HAS BEEN UNABLE TO SUSTAIN THIS ACTIVITY. NVA UNITS HAVE BEEN LARGELY THWARTED IN THEIR EFFORTS IN EASTERN AND CENTRAL DINH TUONG AS A RESULT OF IV CORPS OPERATIONS SUPPORTED BY VERY EFFECTIVE U.S. TACAIR AND B-52 EFFORT. ENEMY UNITS HAVE BEEN HURT BUT THEY WILL CONTINUE TO POSE A THREAT TO RVN 4 AND THE PACIFICATION PROGRAM AS A WHOLE. THEREFORE, ARVN OPERATIONS WILL CONTINUE TO FOCUS ON THE DESTRUCTION OF MAIN FORCE UNITS INCLUDING THE 5TH VC DIVISION. GENERAL NGHI CONTINUES TO REACT TO THE SITUATION AGGRESSIVELY AND INTELLIGENTLY. THE ENTIRE 21ST DIVISION WILL HAVE COMPLETED RETRAINING TODAY AND IS BEING DEPLOYED TACTICALLY. THIS RESTORES THE PRE-INVASION 3 DIVISION FORCE IN THE DELTA AND PERMITS THE 15TH INFANTRY REGIMENT TO BEGIN A BADLY NEEDED TRAINING AND REFITTING PROGRAM. THE 7TH DIVISION IS EARMARKED AS JGS RESERVE; HOWEVER, IT WILL CONTINUE TO OPERATE IN THE DELTA UNLESS A NEW MAJOR THREAT DEVELOPS ELSEWHERE IN-COUNTRY. PRESIDENT

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THIEU IS REINFORCING NORTHERN MR 1 WITH THE 7TH RANGER GROUP FROM MR JK ON 31 AUGUST TO COMPENSATE FOR THE SHIFT OF THE 4TH REGT TO S MR 1. OVERALL, THE GENERAL TREND IN THE DELTA IS FAVORABLE IN THE FACE OF CONTINUED ENEMY EFFORTS TO ACHIEVE GREATER INFLUENCE IN THE AREA. SOME STIFF ENCOUNTERS WITH MAJOR ENEMY FORCES ARE INEVITABLE, BUT THE ENEMY'S OPPORTUNITIES FOR A DRAMATIC SUCCESS ARE GREATLY DIMINISHED.

4. (TS) MR 3 REFLECTS LITTLE PROGRESS ALTHOUGH GENERAL MINH'S INITIAL REACTION TO PRESIDENT THIEU'S STRONG GUIDANCE HAS BEEN POSITIVE AND GIVES SOME BASIS FOR HOPE OF IMPROVEMENT. WHILE IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT THE ENEMY HAS THE COMBAT POWER REQUIRED FOR A MAJOR CONVENTIONAL EFFORT, HE HAS THE CAPABILITY FOR SIGNIFICANT POLITICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT BY INFLECTING FRIENDLY CASUALTIES, DESTROYING MATERIEL, AND REDUCING SECURITY IN AREAS UNDER FRIENDLY CONTROL. OPERATIONS TO SECURE HIGHWAY 13 HAVE NOT BEEN PRODUCTIVE AND GENERAL MINH HAS FINALLY DECIDED TO CHANGE HIS TACTICS IN AN EFFORT TO ACHIEVE GREATER MOBILITY AND FREEDOM OF ACTION. THE RESULTS WILL NOT BE EVIDENT FOR A FEW MORE DAYS BUT HIS NEW STANCE IS AT LEAST ENCOURAGING.

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5. (TS) IN MR 2 ELEMENTS OF THE 2ND NVA DIVISION ALONG WITH SEVERAL BATTALION SIZE SAPPER UNITS APPEAR TO HAVE REINFORCED THE 3RD NVA DIVISION IN NORTHERN BINH DINH. II CORPS CONTINUES TO CONDUCT OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS SUPPORTED BY A LIMITED NUMBER OF B-52 STRIKES, TACAIR AND NAVAL GUNFIRE TO THE WEST OF ROUTE 1. THESE OPERATIONS HAVE SUCCESSFULLY FRUSTRATED ANY ENEMY PLANS FOR MAJOR OFFENSIVE ACTION AND AT THE SAME TIME HAVE INFLICTED MODERATE CASUALTIES ON THE ENEMY MAIN FORCE. THE ENEMY 2ND AND 3RD DIVISIONS RETAIN A FAIR CAPABILITY TO INTERFERE WITH II CORPS PLANS TO REGAIN CONTROL OF THE AREA AND POPULACE IN BINH DINH. WE ARE WATCHING DEVELOPMENTS IN THIS AREA AND IN THE HIGHLANDS AND APPLYING MASSED FIREPOWER ON ENEMY TARGETS AS THEY DEVELOP. IN THE HIGHLANDS SMALL SCALE GROUND ATTACKS AND ATTACKS BY FIRE HAVE INCREASED RECENTLY. ELEMENTS OF THE 320TH NVA DIVISION HAVE RE-ENTERED WESTERN PLEIKU PROVINCE FROM BASE AREAS 701/702. THE THREAT DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE OF MAJOR PROPORTIONS. THE ENEMY DOES HAVE A CAPABILITY TO INTERDICT AND CUT HIGHWAYS 14 AND 19 FOR LIMITED PERIODS NORTH AND WEST OF PLEIKU. GENERAL TOAN HAS DEVELOPED A REGIMENTAL SIZE FORCE IN THE AREA SW OF PLEIKU TO DEVELOP THE SITUATION FURTHER. MEANWHILE HE IS

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CONTINUING TO RETAIN, REST AND REFIT UNITS OF THE 23RD DIVISION  
IN ANTICIPATION OF OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS TO RETAKE THE AREA TO  
THE NORTH AND NORTHWEST OF KONTUM AS SOON AS FAVORABLE WEATHER

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DEVELOPS. THIS COULD COME AS EARLY AS OCTOBER.

6. (TS) IN SOUTHERN MR 1 THE RENEWED ACTIVITY BY THE NVA 711TH DIVISION WHICH CULMINATED IN THE LOSS OF FSB HOSS AND QUE SON DISTRICT TOWN ON 19 AUGUST HAS BEEN PARTIALLY RECTIFIED BY THE AGGRESSIVE REACTION OF PRESIDENT THIEU AND GENERAL TRUONG. THE QUE SON SETBACK RESULTED FROM A POORLY CONDUCTED DEFENSE BY THE 2ND ARVN DIVISION AND WAS INEXCUSABLE IN LIGHT OF THE EARLY WARNING AND FIRE SUPPORT WHICH WAS AVAILABLE. BG HIEP PROVED INCOMPETENT AS A COMBAT COMMANDER AND HIS RELIEF AS WELL AS THAT OF THE SUBORDINATE COMMANDERS INVOLVED WAS A JUSTIFIABLE AND ENCOURAGING RESPONSE BY PRESIDENT THIEU WHICH SHOULD HAVE A STIFFENING EFFECT ON OTHER RVNAF COMMANDERS. AS A RESULT OF PERSONNEL AND EQUIPMENT LOSSES, THE BULK OF THE 5TH INF REGT WILL REQUIRE REFITTING AND RETRAINING. THE RETURN OF THE 4TH REGIMENT TO THIS AREA WILL MAINTAIN THE BALANCE OF POWER IN THIS VERY IMPORTANT SECTOR WHILE THE 5TH REGT IS OUT OF ACTION. IN THE QUANG TRI/THUA THIEN AREA THE

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ENEMY CONTINUES TO REINFORCE AROUND QUANG TRI CITY. ELEMENTS OF AT LEAST TWO REGIMENTS OF THE NVA 312TH DIVISION HAVE BEEN COMMITTED AND ATTACKS BY FIRE IN THE VICINITY OF QUANG TRI CITY HAVE INCREASED IN FREQUENCY AND VOLUME. THEY POSE THE MOST SERIOUS DETERRENT TO FRIENDLY MANEUVER AND WE ARE DEVOTING THE MAJOR SHARE OF OUR EFFORT TO KNOCKING DOWN THAT THREAT. ONE THE

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SUPPLY SIDE, THE NORTH VIETNAMESE ARE PRESENTLY CONDUCTING A TRANSPORTATION OFFENSIVE INVOLVING MOVEMENT OF ORDNANCE AND OTHER WAR RELATED SUPPLIES SOUTH THROUGH SUPPORT FACILITIES LOCATED IN SOUTHERN NORTH VIETNAM. THIS LOGISTICAL PUSH WHICH BEGAN ABOUT 15 AUGUST WILL PROBABLY LAST ABOUT 20 DAYS. SINCE ITS START, ALTHOUGH WE ARE NOT CERTAIN OF THE EXACT AMOUNTS, WE KNOW THAT HUNDREDS OF TONS OF ORDNANCE AND EQUIPMENT HAVE BEEN SHIPPED SOUTHWARD. THE BULK OF THESE SHIPMENTS APPEAR TO BE AMMUNITION OF ALL TYPES, AS WELL AS SIGNIFICANT QUANTITIES OF AK-47 RIFLES AND 12.7MM MACHINE GUNS. GENERAL TRUONG FEELS THAT THE ENEMY HAS DECIDED TO FIGHT THE DECISIVE BATTLE IN THE QUANG TRI AREA AND HE IS ORIENTING HIS OFFENSIVE OPERATIONS ON THE MAJOR ENEMY FORCES RATHER THAN ON TERRAIN OBJECTIVES. OUR B-52 AND TACAIR EFFORT IS

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GENERAL WEYAND. DELIVER DURING WAKING HOURS. FINAL SEC OF 2,  
CLOSELY COORDINATED WITH HIS STRATEGY AND APPEARS TO BE  
PAYING OFF. THE RANGER OPERATION INTO BASE AREA 114 HAS MET  
VERY LITTLE RESISTANCE WHICH TENDS TO SUPPORT THE THESIS THAT  
THE ENEMY MAIN EFFORT IS IN THE QUANG TRI AREA WITH A  
SECONDARY EFFORT AIMED AT HUE ASTRIDE ROUTE 547. THE 1ST  
DIVISION HAS DOGGEDLY CONTINUED TO SPOIL THE ENEMY'S  
OFFENSIVE PLANS AND HAS EDGED WESTWARD BEYOND BASTOGNE  
SIGNIFICANTLY DECREASING THE THREAT TO HUE FROM THAT SECTOR.  
FURTHER TO THE SOUTHEAST, HOWEVER, THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT  
THE ENEMY MAY BE REDISPOSING HIS FORCES THUS INCREASING THE  
THREAT IN THAT AREA. A BN SIZED OPERATION WAS LAUNCHED IN

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IMMEDIATE FUTURE, GENERAL THUONG PLANS TO CONTINUE TO PRESS

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THE ENEMY ALONG THE PRESENT LINES OF CONTACT, THUS FORCING HIM TO CONCENTRATE AND PRESENT LUCRATIVE TARGETS FOR ALLIED FIREPOWER. PROGRESS WILL BE SLOW UNTIL WEATHER OR THE STEADY ATTRITION OF ENEMY STRENGTH FORCES A CHANGE IN ENEMY TACTICS.

7. (TS) OVERALL THROUGHOUT THE REPUBLIC THERE ARE INDICATIONS THAT THE ENEMY WILL ATTEMPT MORE "HIGH POINT" ACTIVITY, PERHAPS AS EARLY AS 2 SEPTEMBER. IN MR 4 THIS ACTIVITY WILL PROBABLY TAKE THE FORM OF INCREASED ATTACKS ON ISOLATED FRIENDLY LOCATIONS COUPLED WITH A CONTINUATION OF HIS PRESENT EFFORT TO ESTABLISH A GREATER PRESENCE IN DINH TUONG AND ADJACENT PROVINCES WHERE HIS OBJECTIVES APPEAR TO INCLUDE CONTROL OF A PORTION OF ROUTE 4. THE SITUATION IN MR 3 FAVORS INCREASED ENEMY ACTIVITY IN THE FORM OF ATTACKS BY FIRE AND GROUND ATTACKS AGAINST FRIENDLY UNITS AND INSTALLATIONS WHICH APPEAR VULNERABLE. THE ARVN PRE-OCCUPATION WITH HIGHWAY 13 AND THE CONTINUED CONCENTRATION OF ARVN FORCES THERE WILL PERMIT THE ENEMY TO SURGE HIS LEVEL OF ACTIVITY. THE SURGE WILL PROBABLY INCLUDE ATTACKS ON MAJOR FRIENDLY INSTALLATIONS AND POSSIBLY ON SAIGON ITSELF. A MAJOR EFFORT TO PREEMPT THESE ENEMY PLANS IS UNDERWAY. THERE IS ALWAYS THE DANGER,

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HOWEVER, OF SOME ENEMY ACTION WHICH WHILE NOT OF GREAT MILITARY  
SIGNIFICANCE WOULD HAVE SEVERE POLITICAL/PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT,  
PARTICULARLY IN THE SAIGON AREA. IN MR 2 THE ENEMY SURGE CAN BE  
EXPECTED TO INCLUDE ATTACKS ON ISOLATED FRIENDLY AREAS  
PARTICULARLY IN SOUTHWEST PLEIKU PROVINCE. ADDITIONALLY HE MAY  
ATTEMPT TO RETAKE ONE OR MORE OF THE DISTRICT TOWNS IN NORTHERN  
BINH DINH PROVINCE. IN SOUTHERN MR 1 WITH THE CHANGE IN  
LEADERSHIP IN THE 2D ARVN DIVISION, THE SITUATION IN THE QUE SON  
AREA SHOULD IMPROVE MARKEDLY. HIGH POINT ACTIVITY BY THE ENEMY  
IN THIS AREA MAY INCLUDE ABF'S AGAINST SENSITIVE AREAS AND AN  
ATTEMPT TO ATTACK INTO THE COASTAL LOWLANDS TO INTERDICT ROUTE 1  
SOUTH OF DA NANG. IN NORTHERN MR 1 THE ENEMY LOGISTICS OFFENSIVE  
AND HIS CONTINUED REINFORCEMENT IN THE QUANG TRI SECTOR  
INDICATE THAT HIS SURGE OBJECTIVES CONTINUE TO BE THE DEFEAT  
OF THE ARVN EFFORT TO RECAPTURE LOST TERRITORY AND SECONDARILY  
AT ATTACK HUE. THROUGHOUT THE RVN WE ARE NOTING AN INCREASE  
IN MOVEMENT OF SAPPER UNITS AND WE CAN EXPECT SAPPER  
PARTICIPATION DURING THE COMING PERIOD OF INCREASED ACTIVITY.  
WHILE THESE TACTICS OFTEN INFLECT HEAVY DAMAGE TO INSTALLATIONS,  
THEIR RESULTS TEND TO BE TRANSITORY AND USUALLY ARE COSTLY TO

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THE ENEMY IN TERMS OF LOSSES WITHIN HIS SAPPER UNITS. IN THE

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LONG RUN THE SAPPER ORGANIZATIONS MAY BE DAMAGED SEVERELY, MUCH AS THE VCI SUFFERED DURING TEI OF 1968.

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8. (TS) THE NECESSITY OF CONTINUING TO PROVIDE US AIR AND NAVAL SUPPORT TO THE RVNAF WITH NO REDUCTION IN THE CURRENT LEVEL OF EFFORT BECOMES MORE APPARENT AS EVENTS UNFOLD. THIS SUPPORT CONTINUES TO BE THE DECISIVE ELEMENT. FOR EXAMPLE, WITHOUT IT THE QUE SON SETBACK WOULD HAVE BEEN A DISASTER.

9. (TS) IN SUMMARY, THE SITUATION DURING THE PAST THREE WEEKS INDICATES A POSITIVE TREND IN MR 4, SOME DETERIORATION IN MR 3, PROGRESS BUT SOME POTENTIAL RISKS IN MR 2, A PARTIALLY ALLEVIATED DETERIORATION IN SOUTHERN MR 1, AND SLOW, SOMEWHAT COLSTLY, BUT STEADY PROGRESS IN THE QUANG TRI/THUA THIEN AREA. THE INFLUENCE OF WEATHER HAS BEEN LESS PRONOUNCED THAN NORMAL FOR THIS TIME OF YEAR; HOWEVER, THIS SHOULD BECOME A SIGNIFICANT FACTOR WITHIN THE NEXT SIX WEEKS. THIS WILL BE PARTICULARLY TRUE IN THE DELTA AND NORTHERN MR1. RAINFALL IN THE DELTA HAS BEEN WELL BELOW AVERAGE FOR THE PAST THREE MONTHS; HOWEVER, SEASONAL FLOODING HAS BEGUN. THIS PUTS THE ENEMY UNDER PRESSURE TO ACHIEVE HIS OBJECTIVES BEFORE THE HIGH WATER MAKES

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THIS INFEASIBLE. IN TURN HIS HASTE MAKE HIM VULNERABLE TO FRIENDLY COUNTERACTION. IN NORTHERN MR 1 THE RAINFALL IN WESTERN THUA THIEN AND QUANG TRI HAS BEEN BELOW AVERAGE AND FLOODING OF THE STREAMS TO THE EAST HAS NOT SIGNIFICANTLY INHIBITED ENEMY

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MOVEMENT FOR EXTENDED PERIODS. WITH THE ONSET OF THE NORTHEAST MONSOON EARLY IN OCTOBER, MAJOR MILITARY OPERATIONS BY BOTH SIDES WILL BECOME INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT. INDICATIONS OF AN UPCOMING SURGE IN ENEMY ACTIVITY INDICATE THAT WE ARE APPROACHING A CRITICAL PERIOD. OVERALL THE GVN, WITH CONTINUED US SUPPORT AT THE CURRENT LEVEL, SHOULD BE ABLE TO ABSORB THE EXPECTED INCREASE IN THE TEMPO OF ENEMY OPERATIONS IN THE NEAR TERM AND REGAIN THE OVERALL INITIATIVE ONCE THE ENEMY HAS COMPLETED HIS SURGE. GDS-1982

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